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Written statement* submitted by the Khiam Rehabilitation Center for Victims of Torture, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[24 May 2018]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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Urgent call to stop Brazil's supply of tear gas to Bahrain*

Introduction

Brazil has been one of the main suppliers of tear gas canisters to Bahrain since 2011, which have been used to repress peaceful protests in the country. The Brazilian company Condor Technologies based in Rio de Janeiro sold over two dozen non-lethal arms, including tear gas spray.1As a consequence of the misuse of tear gas by the Bahraini government, more than 40 people have died in the past 7 years.

Tear gas as fatal weapon

Tear gas can be a method of crowd control when it is used by security authorities only to an acceptable level. However, its excessive use occurs severe harms to civilians' health condition, by exposing their lungs, skins and eyes to toxic chemical agents. The frequent exposure to tear gas in enclosed areas, especially, can cause severe respiratory problems, and even death.2

Weapon sing tear gas in Bahrain

Only between 2011 and 2012, around 40 people died due to the exposure to tear gas.3 According to the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights, 31% of total number of death was caused by the extensive use of tear gas by the government in this period. According to Physicians for Human Rights, the amount of tear gas used against civilians during 18 months between 2011 and 2012 in Bahrain was unprecedented in the 100-year history of tear gas in the world.

In December 2012, 44-year-old Basel Mansoor Al-Qattan, who had suffered from cardiomyopathy and asthma, died after being exposed to tear gas around his house. Likewise, the constant exposure to massive amount of teargas caused 87-year-old Habeeb Ebrahim to faint for the first time in September 2012, and eventually to death in January 2013. In the same month, 8-year-old Qassim Habib from Karbabad lost his life, after the government's attacks on the village with an extensive use of teargas.4 Moreover, in February 2014, activist AbdulAziz al-Abbas was hit by a teargas canister in his face at a funeral procession, which eventually led to his death after two months.5 On 17 January 2015, Abdulaziz al-Saeed died at his home in Bilad al-Qadeem, due to massive tear gas inhalation.6

Tear gas "made in Brazil"

In December 2011, the Brazilian news magazine Época released a few photos of Brazilian tear gas canisters that were used in Bahrain. They apparently showed the logo of their manufacturer, Condor Non-Lethal Technologies, a company based in Rio de Janeiro. A video footage also confirmed that the models of tear gas canisters (GL-202 and GL-203/L), whose potential risk of misuse was clearly described by the company in its advertisement.7

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1 Gabriel Elizondo, 'Bahrain Hitting Close to Home in Brazil', Al-Jazeera, 18 December 2011, http://www.aljazeera.com/blogs/americas/2011/12/91811.html.

2 'Weaponising tear gas: Bahrain's unprecedented use of toxic chemical agents against civilians', Physicians for Human Rights, 2012.

3 'Bahrain Authorities 'Weaponising' Tear Gas', BBC News, 1 August 2012, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-19078659.

4 'Bahrain: An 8 year-old-boy and 87 year-old-man; Two victims in one month of the tear gas collective punishment', Bahrain Centre for Human Rights, 28 January 2013, http://www.bahrainrights.org/en/node/5617.

5 'Bahraini man dies two months after being shot by police: family', Reuters, 18 April 2014, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-bahrain-violence-death/bahraini-man-dies-two-months-after-being-shot-by-police-family-idUSBREA3H0HC20140418.

6 Reda Al-Fardan, 'Brazilian tear gas linked to recent death of Abdulaziz al-Saeed', Bahrain Watch, 26 January 2015, https://bahrainwatch.org/blog/2015/01/26/brazilian-tear-gas-linked-to-the-recent-death-of-abdulaziz-al-saeed/.

7 Jose Antonio Lima and LiucaYonaha, 'Gáslacrimôgeneo "made in Brazil" é usadonarepressão no Bahrein, dizemativistas' Época, 16 December 2011, http://revistaepoca.globo.com/Mundo/noticia/2011/12/gas-lacrimogeneo-made-brazil-e-usado-na-repressao-no-bahrein-dizem-ativistas.html

The Brazilian government initially promised to conduct an investigation on Bahrain's misuse of tear gas manufactured in its country, but later in 2012 denied that Brazil had not exported tear gas to Bahrain. In 2015, however, the accusation reappeared as tear gas canisters manufactured by Condor were found in Bilad al-Qadeem. In late 2015, the Brazilian government rejected the request of a Bahraini human rights organisation to receive an independent investigation of the OECD on this matter.8

There have been constant attempts of Bahraini activists and the international community to stop supplies of tear gas to Bahrain, as it is used as a fatal weapon by the repressive government. Under the pressure of the civil society, in 2014, the South Korean government indefinitely suspended shipments of tear gas to Bahrain. In early 2015, the European Parliament also passed a resolution calling for an end to supply of EU-produced tear gas to Bahrain.9 In the meantime, the Brazilian tear gas canisters were increasingly found in Bahrain.10

Recommendations

To the government of Bahrain:

- Immediately halt all kinds of crackdown on protesters and civilians, including tear gas attacks on villages and homes.
- Investigate the harmful effects of tear gas misuse and suspend all use of tear gas with the purpose of political reprisal to activists and protesters.
- Disclose information about the varieties of toxic chemical agents used by the government.
- Allow scientists and health professionals to conduct critical research on the use and effects of tear gas in the country.

To the government of Brazil:

- Immediately stop the shipment of tear gas to Bahrain until the government of Bahrainadheres to the international standard regarding its use.
- Conduct a thorough investigation on the export record of Brazilian tear gas to Bahrain that are used against Bahraini civilians.

To the international community:

- Suspend exports of tear gas and relevant chemical agents to Bahrain until its government conducts an impartial investigation on its misuse of tear gas and stop violence against civilians.
- Support scientists and health professionals of Bahrain to conduct independent research on the proper use of all toxic chemical agents in the country.

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*Salam for democracy and Human Rights, NGO without consultative status, also shares the views expressed in this statement.

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8 'Brazilian government blocks Bahraini tear gas probe', Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain, 17 December 2015, https://www.adhrb.org/2015/12/8017/.

9 'Ban tear gas to Bahrain and free Nabeel Rajab, says EU Parliament', Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain, 10 July 2015, http://www.adhrb.org/2015/07/ban-tear-gas-to-bahrain-and-free-nabeel-rajab-says-eu-parliament/.

10 Reda Al-Fardan, 'Brazilian tear gas linked to recent death of Abdulaziz al-Saeed', Bahrain Watch, 26 January 2015, https://bahrainwatch.org/blog/2015/01/26/brazilian-tear-gas-linked-to-the-recent-death-of-abdulaziz-al-saeed/.